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Rankini Devi and its Historical Myth Related to Jainism

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Abstract:

The historical myth of Rankini Devi in Jainism has a divine narratives and cultural significance. This study explores the multifaceted aspects of Rankini Devi, a revered deity of Jain origin. It sheds light on the intricate interplay between myth and history. It is trying to examine the roots of Rankini Devi's worship, symbolic representation and rituals associated with her veneration. Through a nuanced exploration, it seeks to unravel the cultural and religious dimensions that have shaped how a Jain deity gradually becomes a Hindu goddess.

Key Words: jainisim, Rankini temple.

India has a rich, diverse and dynamic religious history from the very ancient times. It includes a wide range of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism etc. In this paper the study is about the Rankini Temple situated at Lakshmisagar village of Bankura district of West Bengal and its history related to Jainism. Rankini means 'Rakini' or 'witch'. But how a witch has become a deity and has been worshipped as a hindu goddess is also a matter of quest to many scholars.

Rankini means 'the frightful deity'. Sometimes she is considered to be the deity of tribal people and her shrines are generally found in deep jungle areas. Goddess Rankini is considered to be a kind of manifestation of Mother Goddess Shakti. But there is no reference of Rankini Devi to be found in Vedas, Puranas, or Epics. Though in 'Mangal Kabya' a few reference could be found.

It is considered the origin of worshipping Rankin has begun in the Chotonagpur area. 'Rankini' the name as its meaning has different opinions. Rankini mata has been worshipped by people from ancient times. A famous temple of Rankini Devi is found at village Bansilla Gram Panchayet in Potka block near Jadugora, Jamshedpur in Jharkhand. The stone is believed to be the incarnation of Goddess Kali. Large numbers of devotees come at this temple to worship Maa Rankini. According to a legend, a local tribe spotted a tribal girl taking the form of Devi to kill a demon. While he was following, the girl disappeared into the woods. It was in the same night Devi appeared in his dreams and told him to build a temple at the same place.

Rankini is worshiped at many places like Burdwan, Medinipur, Hoogly etc. There are Rankini Thanas in different places of Bankura. She is worshiped in Khatra. At Hatkata (Raipur) she is worshiped and the symbol is the horse here. At Patrasayer and Krishnanagar of Borjora police station Rankini worshipping tradition is prevalent. The Rankini of Ghatshila is a well-known place. This Rankini was the Kuldevi of Dhalbhum dynasty and Goddess Rankini is here a manifestation of Mother Goddess Shakti. Goddess Rankini is worshipped in the form of a shila. A local priest mentioned that Devi was a child eater, she needs a child everyday but later she failed to win in a condition and nowadays she is worshipped as protector of children.

Lakshmisagar is a village located in the Bankura district of west Bengal, India. The village bears a shrine of Rankini temple for a long time. The place was actually covered by Shal and Mahua trees. A few trees are still there. At that time the statue was under a Bhurru tree. But later it was transformed and a temple was built there. Devotees from Lakshmisagar and surrounding areas come to worship Rankini Mata. Other than Ghatshila the carved idol can be seen here also.



The idol of Rankini Devi at Lakshmisagar

Description of the Statue: The idol is made of black stone. Devi is terrible here. The Statue is almost three feet tall. She is 'Nrimundamalin', 'Astabhuja' and 'Shrigalbahini'. She has round eyes and sharp teeth.

Finding of a proof of Jain community:

Near the goddess there is a decaying idol outside.

This slab is made of stone. The slab is almost Two feet in height. The carvings on the slab are of Jain Tirthankaras. People worship it as Vairab.

According to the Local King of Bhelaidiha,

“Rankini is a deity of jain community. Once

The Intact Slab

It had spread all over India. It should be remembered that when Emperor Samudragupta came into being and Ashwamedha Yagya was done and when Shashanka burned down the Bodhi tree, the Buddha and Jain people came to protect themselves and Jain temples were built in different places of Bankura and Purulia also. So many jain temples and slabs are till now to be found at various places like Telkupi and Pakbirla.”

He also mentioned that during the digging of a well near Rankini temple the ashes come out of it and the chimneys are obviously bearing the history that jain saints lived there in earlier times. During Durgapuja at Lakshmisagar, on the day of Nabami goats are sacrificed here in the presence of local king. The goats are sacrificed as buffalo. A fair is held on the same day. People from different places gather to watch the festival.

Overall, it is said that the shape of Rankini idol is not like the hindu deities. The face and structure are not similar to any other deities belong to hindu religion and the intact slab engraved of twenty four Jain Tirthankaras is also indicating its connection to Jainism. It’s a matter of research interest for any scholar or a person of speculative mind. For nearly four hundred years Hindu people had been worshipping Rankini Mata at lakshmisagar and thus in course of time it had gained recognition with Hindu goddesses gradually.



View of Rankini Temple from outside

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